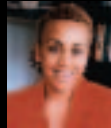


W Educating Women

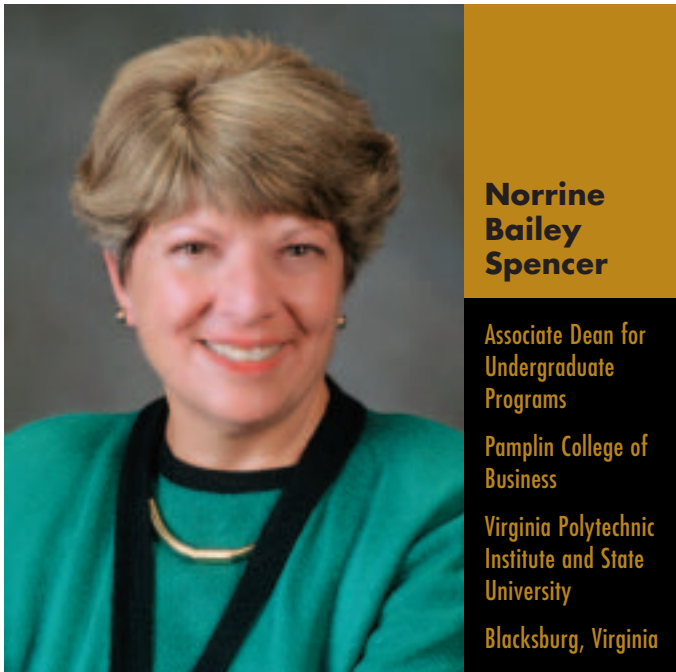
Eight deans and professors tell their personal stories of achieving success in the disproportionately male world of management education.

by Sharon Shinn



Behind every successful individual is a remarkable story fueled by a singular set of drives and ambitions. In the field of management education, some of the most fascinating stories are told by women who have taken positions as teachers and administrators in a field that has traditionally been dominated by men. Even when they aren't aware of how impressive their achievements are, these women are beating the odds: Only about a third of the current MBA classes are made up of women, and only 11 percent of business school deans are women. A long, challenging road lies between the point of enrollment in business school and the time of assuming the high-profile role of dean.

For eight women who currently are deans and faculty members at business schools worldwide, those challenges have been diverse. Some say they have fought against prejudices and inequities; others merely fought to do well in their own careers, not even noticing the gender disparity in their fields. Their stories are unique, but they share a common thread: The skill and desire to succeed.



The launching of Sputnik may have defined Norrine Bailey Spencer's career. America's fear that the Russians would move ahead in the space race caused schools nationwide to encourage young students to take math and science courses, so Spencer joined a test group of kids who enrolled in advanced curricula in 6th and 7th grade. After finishing the program years later, she chose to study math in college.

"It was a time when women were locked in their residence halls at night, and there weren't that many young women studying math. Just getting together to have study groups was impossible," she says. "I think that having been an only child and taking a major that was not traditional for women made me very comfortable in isolated situations."

Some of Spencer's epiphanies came in the late '70s when she was reading landmark books such as *The Managerial Woman* by Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardim and *Men and Women of the Corporation* by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. "In *Managerial Woman*, the authors maintain that men and women have similar goals in the corporate world, but they experience things vastly differently in terms of life responsibilities, opportunities, and pressures. They also noted that women who were succeeding in the corporate world were of a mold—they had been educated in nontraditional areas and were often the oldest child or only child. Even though I fit some of those characteristics, it prompted me to think about the lack of equity in terms of predicting success. I also

thought Kanter's early work about the isolates helped me understand what I was going through."

She has since been determined to offer herself as a role model by taking visible positions in the academic world and in associations that benefit women. She is a member of AACSB International's affinity group for women in management education and has co-chaired the Virginia Executive Committee of the American Council on Education's National Identification Program. Nonetheless, she doesn't believe anyone has to choose a role model based solely on gender. "I say that because I didn't have that luxury—I didn't have a female professor in my major until I was a senior. And so I think it behooves all of us to be sensitive to people who didn't have the same opportunities we had."

While she takes personal responsibility for mentoring others, Spencer also believes colleges must do some of the work by reaching down to high school girls to make sure they develop an interest in math and science. That might mean sponsoring computer camps for girls; it might mean opening a dialogue with high school and junior high school teachers. It might mean following research by organizations such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which is looking at how people are attracted to technology fields, she says.

Spencer believes business schools can attract more women, but first they must analyze "what the patterns are and where the work needs to be done," she says. "Are there curricula that seem to be disproportionately of this gender or this race? If your degree program doesn't reflect the population of your students, why?" In addition, she says, business schools must "make sure they treat women fairly and create a climate that encourages them at a college level."

Schools also must make a point of bringing in female role models to show students that women can be successful, particularly at the corporate level. "A couple of years ago we had a dinner featuring 200 alumnae who had been nominated as outstanding people," she says. "We had them sit down to dinner with 200 undergraduates, so that every other person was a successful businesswoman. That kind of informal networking has taken place quite naturally for men, but it has not been quite so prevalent for women."

Spencer encourages women to find other opportunities to network, "through a national sorority or through the National Organization for Women, or a club, or a choir, or your circle of friends. Even if you take away the labels of networking and mentoring, you need to find someone who shares your aspirations, who supports you and encourages you, and who is savvy about the outside world."



**Helen
Frame
Peters**

**Dean of the
Carroll School
of Management**

Boston College

**Chestnut Hill,
Massachusetts**

Helen Peters always expected to be an academic. She just took a long detour into the world of finance first, holding a variety of positions in key firms in the financial services industry: Scudder Kemper Investments, Merrill Lynch, the Union Bank of Switzerland, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, among others. She has chosen to enter the world of academia now because “this is an unbelievable time to be in education.”

At Boston College, the undergraduate degree focuses on arts and sciences, and Peters thinks it’s absolutely critical that students acquire core skills. “They have to take math, learn how to write effectively, and acquire computer skills, so they have tools they can trade with someone who might hire them. I tell undergraduates to take as many courses as they can that will make them interesting people, that will push them beyond their courage, but not beyond their ability.”

As a successful woman in both business and business school, Peters works toward gender equity in a number of ways—for instance, by being part of the Trustees’ Council of Penn Women at the University of Pennsylvania. The group brings potential faculty to the school to give lectures, creates opportunities for women in sports, holds dinners so that students can meet with successful alums, and works to get women appointed to managerial positions. “There was one woman dean when we started. Now more than half the deans at the University of Pennsylvania are women,” she says.

It’s a far cry from her own days as a student, when she was the only female getting a Ph.D. in finance at Wharton. Professors made much of that fact—for instance, giving her an indifference curve based on bikinis and miniskirts. “That can be the kind of thing that keeps people down, unless they have a tremendous amount of courage and the desire to prove themselves,” Peters says. “A Ph.D. program is tough. I started with 16 people, and only three of us got our degrees.”

Though much of the sexism is gone, there is still inequity in the numbers of men and women admitted to business school, Peters notes. She doesn’t believe this is because there aren’t enough women applying to graduate schools. “Maybe the proportion of men applying is higher, but there are plenty of women applying who have the right scores and the right skills. You don’t have to admit them in proportion,” she says.

Even when the numbers are equal, Peters believes it’s still more difficult for women to get a Ph.D. than it is for men. Because Ph.D. programs are getting smaller and they are frequently funded by the school, schools are less likely to take a chance on someone who might not complete the degree, she says. That often means choosing a candidate with a very focused background in the discipline that’s going to be studied.

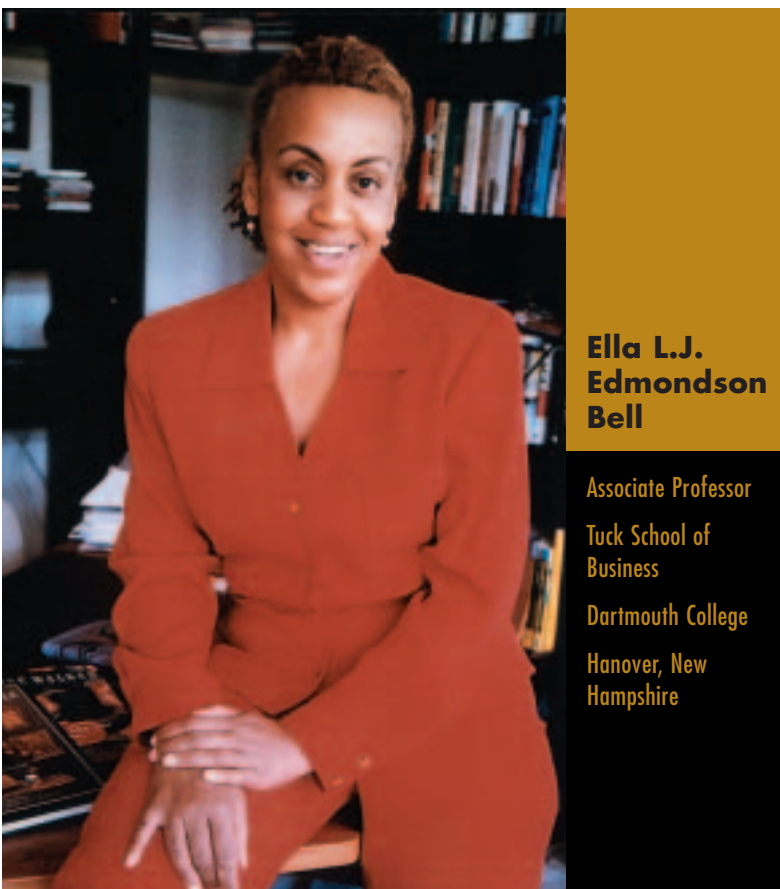
“Women tend to be very broad-based. Men tend to be sharpshooters. Ph.D. programs encourage the sharpshooter focus,” she says. “As much as I think it’s important to be broad-based in education, I think it is a disadvantage to someone interested in entering a Ph.D. program. If I were coming out of an undergraduate program right now, I doubt if a school would have taken a chance on me.”

Even when women earn their Ph.D.s, they face some difficulties moving up the academic ladder, Peters says. “It’s harder for a woman to be a dean of a business school than to be president of a university,” she says. “Three Ivy League schools have female presidents. But of the six Ivy League universities that have business schools, none have female deans, and there are only three female deans in the top 50 business schools. I think it’s because business school is really where the rubber hits the road in terms of potential donors, business alums, and the connection to the business community—and that community is predominantly male.”

But if women don’t pursue Ph.D.s, they may find their opportunities limited, she believes. “If I’d had an MBA, my own career would have been much more difficult, because there were so many talented MBAs walking around on Wall Street. I was one of the few people with a Ph.D. It didn’t make a difference that I was female—I was enough of an oddity just being a Ph.D. I came in with a very specific skill. I was the expert. They had to give me all sorts of opportunities, because no one else could do what I did.”

“Many younger African American women are not being groomed. They come from good schools, they’re bright, and they don’t necessarily believe racialized sexism is alive in the workplace.”

Ella Bell



**Ella L.J.
Edmondson
Bell**

Associate Professor

Tuck School of
Business

Dartmouth College

Hanover, New
Hampshire

Ella Bell has spent her entire career in the classroom—and much of that time focusing on issues of race. “My expertise is in understanding issues of women, particularly women of color in managerial positions,” she says. “It’s an area that has been understudied, undervalued, and basically invisible.”

Even ground-breaking studies of women in the workforce have failed to explore the issues as they relate to women of color, she says. “Researchers assumed that if you were a woman, you had the same experience, regardless of race, industry, or class—and that’s not true. That’s why black women, Latina women, and Asian women aren’t in the pipeline. That’s why they’re not represented in the high echelons of companies.”

Last summer, she and co-author Stella Nkomo published *Our Separate Ways: Black and White Women and the Struggle for Professional Identity*, which examines how the life of a black woman differs from the life of a white woman in the corporate world. “Executives would tell us, ‘We can’t retain black women. We don’t know how to recruit them.’ Black

women have an extraordinarily difficult time trying to break the informal network. They’re not included. White women talk about a glass ceiling. Black women experience a concrete wall. They can’t even see to the other side. There are three black men in key positions at top companies, but there are no black women at all.

“Many younger African American women are not being groomed,” Bell continues. “They’re not getting mentors. They come from good schools, they’re bright, and they don’t necessarily believe racialized sexism is alive in the workplace. Therefore, they’re being derailed early in their careers. They start switching companies, or they start looking at non-profits and nontraditional fields. Others are just hanging on, thinking something will happen if they wait long enough. But the bottom line is, they have to get the resources to do their jobs. They have to build relationships. They have to push their way in, and not everyone knows how to do that.”

One key is to help black and white women build coalitions, she believes. “Part of the problem is that white women don’t identify around their race. Black women do. White women get seduced into thinking they can make a difference, until they run into the glass ceiling. Black women aren’t seduced—they aren’t even courted. But until they understand the power games that are being played, neither group will get the advantages they could be getting.”

As more women—and more minorities—join the workforce, businesses everywhere will have to think about “who has power and how we share power,” she says. “One group—white males—cannot be the only power holders. Organizations and business schools must look at the people who are different, the women and the people of color, and discover the issues that are blocking them. What are the information networks and informal practices they might be excluded from? What types of promotions are they not getting and why?”

The first step toward equalizing the numbers in corporate settings is to improve the numbers at business schools. “We need to identify and recruit black women into business schools so they can be in the pipeline for top positions in companies,” Bell says. “Part of recruiting is developing students, and part of it is knowing that black students might want to do research a little bit differently. I have often been told, ‘If you study race, you won’t get an academic position.’ In the year 2002, students are still being told that they have to study popular theories and statistics. If you’re going to study race, you’re going to break down the status quo; those theories aren’t going to be too popular. But we have been studying white men for a *very long time*.”



Sandra J.N. Dawson

KPMG Professor of Management Studies

Director of The Judge Institute of Management

Master of Sidney Sussex College

University of Cambridge

Cambridge, England

Sandra Dawson can claim two impressive titles: She's the first woman to head the Judge Institute of Management and the first woman to be elected Master of the formerly all-male Sidney Sussex College. "People ask me what it's like to be the first woman Master at a Cambridge college founded for men. I say, 'I have no comparisons. I don't know what it would feel like to be a man elected in 1999,'" she responds. "What I can say is, that as the first woman, I do have a sense of history. This college has been going for 400 years. Women were admitted 25 years ago, and now it has a woman who was elected by the fellows. I feel that now the door of Sidney is open, so whoever is Master next can be either a man or a woman. The fellows won't have to think, 'Oh dear, should we have a woman, should we have a man?' So I do have a sense of history and great pride, but I go about the job as Sandra Dawson, who happens to be a woman."

Dawson also was recently named Businesswoman of the Year at the *Cambridge Evening News* Business Excellence Awards, an honor that she won for the work of running the business school. "The university is 800 years old and the business school is 12 years old, but the business school is at the leading edge of teaching, research, and executive development," she says. "We have to run it like a business. We have to look at our revenues, our reputation, our capacity to grow and develop, just as any business does."

She's quite aware that there are relatively few women in comparable positions in British schools. "I think any working woman in the business world or in business education is quite used to going into rooms where she knows she will be the only woman," she says. "But gradually it's becoming not uncommon to be one of *two* women out of 12 or 14."

She believes that more women can be brought into high-ranking academic positions in the U.K.—but they'll have to be actively encouraged. Those recruiting for management positions should look at curriculum vitae "in an open way," considering applicants who have had nontraditional careers. "They should look at their skills and achievements, without expecting everybody to come through some sort of regulation career track. That will enable more women to get positions up the ladder."

While Dawson doesn't generalize about whether women have more commitment to family issues than men do, she does say, "I always knew my family was enormously important. A day never goes by that I don't think about the balance between my work and my family. I made sure I could secure my life as a wife and mother and at the same time be successful in my career."

In that career, she says, it was critical for her to have "a strong sense of myself making the right decisions for me and not being swayed too much by a particular tide. One can't say, 'This is the way to do it.' I said, 'Let's see where I can be in the next two years, the next three years,' all the time striving to do extremely well. Out of that has come a career, but it wasn't mapped out from day one."

As important as it is to seize the opportunities that come her way, Dawson believes it's even more important to have a "sense of joy" in what she's doing. "That keeps the other things in balance," Dawson says.



Jeanne M. Brett

DeWitt W. Buchanan Jr. Distinguished Professor of Dispute Resolution & Organizations

Kellogg Graduate School of Management

Northwestern University

Evanston, Illinois

"My first career obstacle was that I didn't know what I wanted for a career, except I knew I didn't want to be a schoolteacher or a secretary," says Jeanne Brett. When she entered college, she knew she was interested in industrial psychology and eventually discovered the Industrial and Labor Relations program at the University of Illinois. "I loved it! It was interdisciplinary, it was intellectual, it was applied. The faculty, all male, did not seem to notice that I was the only female student."

**“Men and women who reduce work for family are stigmatized,
even when others privately envy them.”**

Jeanne M. Brett

Gender issues didn't surface for her, either. “I was oblivious to the fact that there were few women. No one in my educational environment was suggesting that what I was doing was either inappropriate or impossible for a woman. When I entered the job market, I had lots of interviews and several offers.” She entered a nurturing environment for women when she joined Kellogg, where other women were already established in professorial positions.

Still, she acknowledges that the job of teaching is “a lot harder than when I first came to Kellogg in 1976. Research standards have increased, as has competition for journal space. The technological expectations for classroom performance require hours of preparation time. Students' expectations of what goes on in the classroom have also changed. We used to do the exercises and sit around a big table and talk about the results. It was rather relaxed. Now every minute of the class is orchestrated to maximize the students' time.

“There haven't been many changes that make the job easier,” she continues. “We're teaching fewer but larger classes, for example. We have less and less clerical support. We are sharing teaching materials and ideas, but that too raises the bar. Then, once you get tenure, all your professional associations want you to be an officer, journals want you to be a reviewer, schools want you to review other's tenure decisions. You have to learn to say no.”

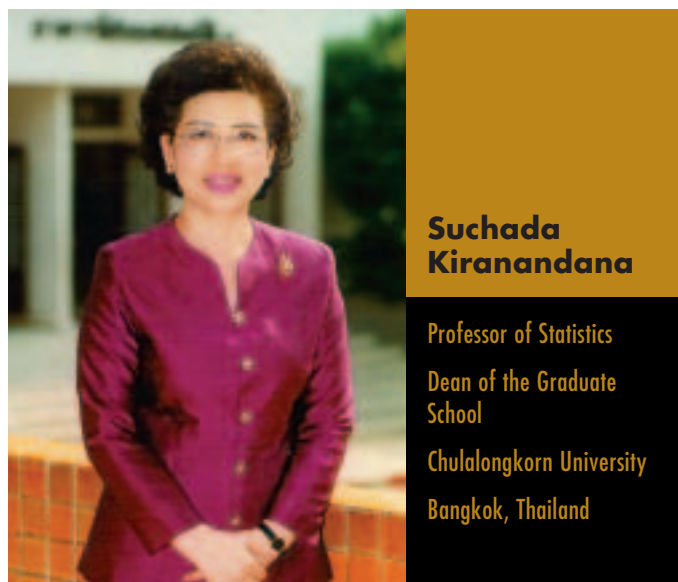
While the job itself may be harder, the situation for women has grown better, she believes. She cites the high number of female applicants for Ph.D. programs, as well as a growing number of tenured, chaired female faculty at Kellogg. In the business arena, the major obstacle to success she sees for women—and for men—is the fact that jobs eat up more and more of an individual's time, making it more difficult for anyone to balance a career and a family.

“Technology and competitiveness have increased the difficulty of professional jobs without reducing their scope,” Brett says. “Men and women who work longer hours get paid more, are believed to be more loyal, and get opportunities that are not presented to those who are not around as much. Men and women who reduce work for family are stigmatized, even when others privately envy them.”

In fact, one of the accomplishments she is proudest of in her own career is being able to strike just that balance between “having a productive full-time career while rearing two children and sustaining a marriage.” She urges other women in the business management field not to hold off on having children until they're perfectly situated, because “there is no good time in this career to have babies. I do not

advocate waiting until you have tenure. And, while your time is your own, except when you are in the classroom, your desks at home and at school are always piled high with work. You have to make a life and battle the tendency to overwork. And know that, in making a life, you make choices that affect your professional standing.”

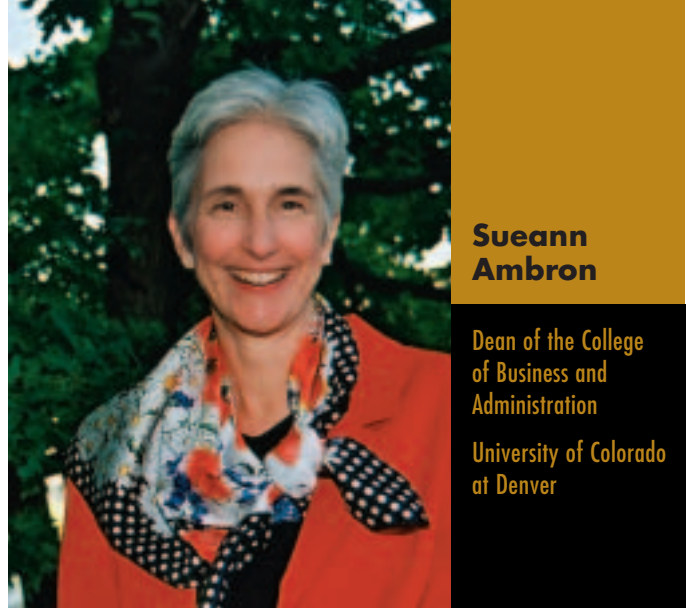
As for her own future choices and career moves, she says that she can't even begin to guess. “Karl Weick once wrote a paper titled, ‘Careers as eccentric predicates.’ I tend not to know what my goals are until I'm halfway there.”



In Thailand, women are more equally represented in business—and business school—than they are in America and parts of Europe, says Suchada Kiranandana. Business school applicants must pass a national entrance exam, and women traditionally score well. As a result, about 50 percent of undergraduate students are women. More faculty members are also women, she says.

“I think in Thailand, many of the male Ph.D.s find it more challenging and gratifying to work in the business world, whereas many of the women like to teach and do research,” she says. That trend was a bit reversed after the recent Asian economic crisis, she says: “It was a little easier to get more men on staff.”

As for herself, Kiranandana always wanted to teach—and teach in Thailand. Though she received her graduate degrees at Harvard and has been offered attractive positions in business, she says, “I could never push myself away from school. And I always believed my responsibility was back here in Thailand.”



**Sueann
Ambron**

Dean of the College
of Business and
Administration

University of Colorado
at Denver

Nonetheless, she feels that it's important to her, as a business educator, to have a clear understanding of the business world, which is why she accepted a position as independent director and member of the audit committee of the Thai Farmers Bank. "If you are a faculty member and you have an opportunity to look really deeply into a business, it enriches your experience and your confidence. It gives you a bridge to the real world," she says.

It's not surprising that her outside commitment has to do with numbers, since Kiranandana has been drawn to math from the beginning of her education. She remembers how exciting it was when the first computer, an IBM 1620, came to Thailand. "Not that I'm attracted to the computer, but I like knowing numbers and how to use them. In business, you have to rely on the data," she says.

She's also committed to globalization and was involved with Global Forum 2002. Kiranandana believes it's particularly important for business schools in small countries like Thailand to keep pace with international developments. "Rules change, laws change, and people change. You have to be able to exist in this type of turmoil," she says. "Business schools in Thailand must stay abreast of what's going on. We have to turn out graduates who can do business in the country and in the world."

While female graduates from business school are heading up businesses and government agencies in very acceptable numbers, she says, there is still a pull on working women to fulfill the traditional homemaker roles. "Women here have a double role—we work, then go home and do all the work there. In Thailand, it might be easier to get paid help, but women are still expected to take care of the family," she says.

Therefore, choosing a supportive partner is critical for women who want careers and families, and Kiranandana has one. They have an agreement: One of them needs to be home with the children. "It's on a first-come, first-taken basis," she says. "We have a book and we have to sign up. If you come late to the book and the day you want is taken, you have to stay home with the kids."

Maintaining that balance gets a little easier as the children get older, she notes. As the years have passed she has shifted the time frames she allots to work and home. Even so, it's not easy. "I have two boys, I'm a full-time teacher, I'm the dean and department head, and I also do some social work on committees and with associations. It's difficult to manage my time. My students say to me, 'How can you survive? You're not late to class, you always give exams on time.' So I think they look at me and say, 'Hmmm, this is not going to be easy, but this is something I can manage.'"

"My career has been most significant when I have done things that were high-risk, cutting-edge, or never done before," says Sueann Ambron. This included founding Avulet Inc., a company that delivers Internet-based services for telecom and data-com companies, as well as stints in high-tech divisions of Viacom, Paramount, and Apple. "I love figuring out what it is people want to use and how they will use computers and digital information in new ways."

She also has been particularly drawn to technology and education. "Can technology support education in significant ways? The answer is yes, but it's not as easy as we thought in the late '70s and early '80s."

Even though Ambron spent much of her career in a high-tech field, she didn't have a sense of being a lone woman in an industry dominated by men. "I never even thought about it," she says. "In places like software development, there was such a demand for new work that gender just wasn't an issue. In my experience, technology is one of the fields where women can really excel, particularly in Silicon Valley. There, you'll find women who are CEOs or chief technology officers."

While she has always found the technology field exciting, she was recently lured back to academia. "I've always valued the ability to work on new ideas, which you can do in a higher education environment," she says. "I thought I could bring my business experience back to the university in a way that would be beneficial to the students and faculty. I have a very different point of view than I did when I was first teaching at Stanford. I am interested in how the university can build value in the business community."

She hasn't quite left her real-world passion behind, however, and she considers it essential that any business school ally itself closely with its surrounding business community. The Denver campus of the University of Colorado is " smack dab in the middle of the Rocky Mountain business environment," she says. She feels comfortable calling on top business leaders for input on the curriculum, exchanges on research ideas, and political or financial support.

"Business schools have to be very sensitive to the needs of the businesses they serve. Do their students have the skills and talents that these businesses require? In addition, business

“Historically, every time women have poured into the workforce, there has been a huge ripple effect, the shifting of the tectonic plates of society. That’s what’s happening now.”

Nancy F. Koehn

schools have to be very sensitive to the changes in the business environment. What are the implications of multinational companies trying to work from Colorado? What are human resources practices like in the U.S., and how do they differ from human resources practices in Europe, Asia, or Latin America? What are the trends in telecom, tech, and biotech?” Both businesses and business schools benefit when the two come together to discuss such issues, Ambron says.

She is not just focused on increasing numbers of women in business school, but on improving business education in general. “The business school at CU-Denver is the largest graduate school of business in the state of Colorado,” she says. “We have 2,490 students, and slightly more than 50 percent are women. Make it a great educational experience for students, and you’ll get more men *and* women.”



While Nancy Koehn sees her career as a “healthy mix of serendipity and conscious planning,” she says two factors were very important in her development: excellent mentors and a strong sense of her own goals. She always found it critical to “understand what I really loved and where I had been as a scholar—being able to keep a split screen in my mind’s eye between my bank of experience and what I learned would really make me tick. I would tell every woman who aspires to a position of leadership never to lose sight of either of those data files.”

She also owes a debt to mentors and teachers who “helped me learn to think broadly about how to navigate organizations; how to think rigorously and with integrity about the material of my trade; and finally, how to hold on

to my humanity in moments when there were many political, substantive, psychological, and material demands on me.”

Those demands have been intense. “I’ve worked 80 hours a week for ten years. How do you do that and hold onto a rich and satisfying marriage? We talk a lot about the work/life balance. I don’t know that those are the right file folders. Living well in this context is a very complicated enterprise, but it’s critical to the next generation of female leaders. We are human beings first, and our ability to lead or communicate leadership to the next generation has to come from that animated corpus of our humanity.”

The fact that the corporate world has too few female leaders is something Koehn analyzes from a historian’s perspective. She believes a key barrier to the rise of women is the fact that “organizations founded before 1975 were really built around a professional workforce of men, with commitments that are different from women’s traditional commitments,” she says. “The very structure that has grown up in companies in a post-war era was not designed to accommodate women who have elder parents or huge family responsibilities.” Some companies may be investigating ways to change this, she points out, noting that Deloitte & Touche has pioneered a range of job categories that give men and women more flexibility in their working lives.

In addition to the structural issues, she says that the competitive nature of global business has also made corporations resistant to change. “How do you figure out how to deal with huge social and economic injustices when most businesses feel that the intensity of competition is growing by leaps and bounds? With more competition, there’s often less economic, financial, strategic, and cultural slack to experiment with change. The margin for error is so small.”

Time may be the best ally for women who are able to look to the future. “I think we might be in the third chapter of a ten- or 12-chapter book about the huge shift in the balance of power in society,” she says. While women have always worked hard, she says, not until the last 25 years have they entered the workforce in such great numbers and in so many positions of leadership. “So if you think about what that power shift means organizationally for both large businesses and individuals, and how those things sync up, some changes just aren’t going to happen in Chapter One. It involves too many organizations—work, family, community, and state, local, and national governments. Historically, every time women have poured into the workforce, there has been a huge ripple effect, the shifting of the tectonic plates of society. That’s what’s happening now. We’re not going to get any fast answers.” 